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**Amendments to the claims:**

27. (New) A method of forming a superabsorbent, water-resistant coating on the surface of an article comprising:

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- a) preparing an aqueous liquid coating composition comprising: a water-soluble superabsorbent polymer precursor in aqueous solution, a binder in aqueous solution, an optional viscosity-modifying agent, and an optional lubricant;
  - b) applying said liquid coating composition to the surface of the article to form a liquid coating; and
  - c) drying and curing the liquid coating composition on the surface of the article to form a water-absorbing, water-resistant coating of superabsorbent polymer that absorbs water when it is wetted and desorbs water when it is dried.

28. (New) The method of claim 27, wherein the step of applying the liquid coating composition to the surface of the article comprises contacting the liquid coating composition with the surface of the article to form a layer of liquid coating over the entire surface of the article.

29. (New) The method of claim 27, wherein said polymer precursor is selected from the group consisting of anionic alkali salts and alkali metal salts of said superabsorbent polymer precursor.

30. (New) The method of claim 29, wherein said polymer precursor is a polyacrylate polymer precursor.

31. (New) The method of claim 27, wherein said binder is a film-forming binder.

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32. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein said binder is selected from the group consisting of polyesters, polyurethanes, epoxies, latex and mixtures thereof.

33. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein said viscosity-modifying agent is a polyacrylamide.

34. (New) The method of claim 30, wherein said step of preparing said aqueous liquid coating composition further includes adding at least one wetting agent.

3. (Canceled Herein) ~~The coating composition of claim 24, further comprising a viscosity-modifying agent.~~

5. (Canceled Herein) ~~The coating composition of claim 24, further comprising a lubricant.~~

6. (Canceled Herein) ~~The coating composition of claim 24, further comprising a binder.~~

10. (Canceled Herein) ~~The coating composition of claim 25, further comprising a viscosity-modifying agent.~~

11. (Canceled Herein) ~~The coating of claim 25, further comprising a lubricant.~~

20. (Canceled Herein) ~~The aqueous coating composition of claim 26, wherein the viscosity-modifying agent is selected from the group consisting of alkyl celluloses, acrylamide polymers and mixtures thereof.~~

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24. (Canceled Herein) ~~A coating composition for an article comprising a superabsorbent water soluble polymer precursor in aqueous solution, wherein the superabsorbent water soluble polymer precursor is a polyacrylate.~~

25. (Canceled Herein) ~~A coating formed on the surfaces of a reinforcing article, comprising a superabsorbent water soluble polymer, wherein the superabsorbent water soluble polymer, after curing, absorbs up to about 400 times its initial dry weight in water when immersed in an aqueous environment, and desorbs water when the coating is dried.~~

~~2b. (Canceled Herein) An aqueous coating composition comprising:  
a superabsorbent polymer, wherein said superabsorbent polymer is selected from the group consisting of anionic alkali salts and alkali metal salts of a superabsorbent polymer;  
a viscosity modifying agent; and  
a binder.~~